

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE

CHAILEY RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL,

FOR THE YEAR 1907.

REPORT.

Gentlemen,—I am glad to be able to report that during the year 1907 there has again been steady progress made in improving the sanitary condition of your district.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.—The new drainage scheme for the Asylum Corner, Wivelsfield, will be of great help to that locality. At Cooksbridge, Barcombe and a part of Chailey there are several houses which require much better systems of drainage than they now possess, and I trust it will soon be possible to report some improvements, especially at Cooksbridge, where the new schools are now occupied and many children are, in consequence, brought together there from the surrounding neighbourhood. There has been no trouble in the removal of house refuse.

The supplying of milk still remains one of the chief industries in the district, and I am glad to say that there has been an improvement made in the way some of the cowstalls are kept, but many still leave much to be desired in the methods of cleanliness and care. The adoption of the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order will doubtless have the effect of directing more attention to the proper keeping of cows and dealing with milk. I would strongly urge all cowkeepers to call in a veterinary surgeon in every case where *any* swelling in the udder is noticed, with the view to prevent the possible spread of tuberculosis by the milk.

THE HOUSE ACCOMMODATION in the district is generally good. Twenty-five new houses have been occupied during the year and plans of all of them were submitted before building.

WATER SUPPLY.—Efforts are being made to connect houses with water mains where possible. At present the chief supply is from wells of very varying depths.

RAINFALL.—Miss Heale has again kindly given me the record of the rainfall at Ketches, Newick.

| 1907. | | | |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|--------|
| | Inches. | | Inches |
| January | 00·39 | August | 1·77 |
| February | 1·34 | September | 0·57 |
| March | 0·93 | October | 5·42 |
| April | 3·23 | November | 1·04 |
| May | 1·88 | December | 1·55 |
| June | 1·71 | | |
| July | 1·68 | | 21·51 |

The average fall for the seven previous years was 27.29 inches.

The general sanitary condition of the schools has improved, but there are still some without a proper water supply. The proposed medical inspection of school children should be of great benefit, especially with regard to eyesight and cleanliness. I have to thank the teachers and school attendance officers for the prompt way in which information of illness among the scholars has been given and for the help they have rendered in dealing with infectious cases.

NUISANCES have been abated in several parishes and systematic inspection has been carried out in the district, both by Mr. Weller and myself.

The epidemic of diphtheria at Ringmer, which started in November, 1906, and continued in 1907, has constituted our greatest trouble during the year, the number of cases notified being:—

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|----|
| In January | 3 | In August | 1 |
| In February | 5 | In September | 4 |
| In March | 3 | In October | 4 |
| In April | 2 | In November | 2 |
| In May | 3 | In December | 0 |
| In June | 4 | | |
| In July | 2 | | 33 |

I am still of the opinion that drain gases have some influence upon the causation of diphtheria by rendering people (and especially children) more liable if exposed to infection, and I think that the necessary upheaval of the old drains and cesspools connected with the new system of drainage at Ringmer would be likely to have this effect. Great efforts were made to prevent the spreading of the disease by removal of patients to the isolation hospital and disinfection of the houses to the best of our ability. Your Inspector was constantly in Ringmer and I paid frequent visits. The schools were closed for an extra week after the Christmas holidays, re-opening on 14th January. They were again closed from 28th February to the 8th April, and from 14th June to 12th August; and in October from the 11th to November 25th; with the view to preventing the spreading of infection among the children. In October the school buildings were most thoroughly disinfected under Mr. Weller's supervision. The forms and desks, &c., were removed into the yards and thoroughly scrubbed under my directions. I ordered all of the plasticine and sticks, &c., for working it to be burned, together with some other small articles which could not well be disinfected. The whole of the books, needlework, boxes (containing pens, pencils, &c.) were put through the disinfectant.

at the isolation hospital. The Education Committee of the East Sussex County Council paid for the labour and materials used in disinfecting the schools and for the carriage of books, &c., to and from the disinfector.

Dr. Richard Reece, from the Local Government Board, visited Ringmer in September in consequence of the prevalence of diphtheria there and issued a most interesting and instructive report. He advised that "swabs" should be taken from the throats and noses of all the children in Standard I. at the Ringmer Council School. This was done, and upon the examination of these "swabs" Dr. Foulerton reported that 14 out of 48 proved to harbour the bacillus of diphtheria; and I have no doubt that the same percentage would have held good throughout the whole school at that time, but few showed any marked clinical symptoms. I wrote to all of the parents of the children that were proved to have the specific micro-organisms to suggest that they should call in a doctor and keep the children under observation.

Among Dr. Reece's recommendations, he says:—"Prompt and efficient isolation of all infectious cases should be secured, preferably in hospital, and 'infected' and 'suspected' persons should not, in the case of diphtheria, be allowed out of 'quarantine' until they are proved bacteriologically to be free from infection."

METHODS OF DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—NOTIFICATION.—This, I think, has been fairly satisfactory, but probably some known cases have not been reported. It is very important that every responsible person should realise the necessity for "notification" and the penalties for not carrying it out, because the protection given to the public by proper isolation and treatment of cases which are notified may be very much discounted if others carrying infection are allowed to mix freely with other people, especially among school children.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL.—This institution has again proved of great use to the district. Whatever doubts there may be in some localities as to the benefits of isolation in hospital, its usefulness cannot be over-estimated in a district like ours, where so many

people are connected with milk supply, as the removal of the cases enables the work to go on which might be impossible if the patients were treated at home. From the district 33 cases of diphtheria and seven of scarlet fever were treated in hospital, together with nine cases of scarlet fever from the Uckfield Rural District. One child died in hospital from gangrene of leg. She had suffered from infantile paralysis and been weakly for some years. There were some serious cases which required very careful nursing.

DISINFECTION.—This has been well carried out by your Inspector of Nuisances. The removal of patients to hospital and disinfection of their houses has been very prompt. The disinfector at the hospital has been re-set and will now be worked more economically. It has proved useful to the whole district. The new disinfector fixed at the Workhouse will also be of great use in dealing with the clothing of people, and especially for the tramps passing through the institution.

On reference to the five statistical tables for the year it will be seen on No. 1 that the area is estimated at 49,975 acres, the population 12,219, number of houses 2,332 and the average number of persons per house is 5.2; the number of births being 227 and deaths 129—giving the low death rate of 10.5 per 1,000 of the estimated population—the average for the previous ten years being 12. There is nothing of importance to note on Table II. Table III. shows that 40 cases of diphtheria were notified and 13 of scarlet fever. It is satisfactory to note that of these cases 33 with diphtheria and seven with scarlet fever were removed to the isolation hospital. Table IV. shows that the total number of deaths from all causes was 129, 21 being under one year of age and 55 of 65 years and upwards. There were 18 deaths from phthisis, four from cancer, 11 from pneumonia and eight from bronchitis. Table V. deals with the cause of death of the children under one year of age, but there is nothing of importance to remark upon.

Your obedient Servant,

FRANK GRAVELY,
Medical Officer of Health.

